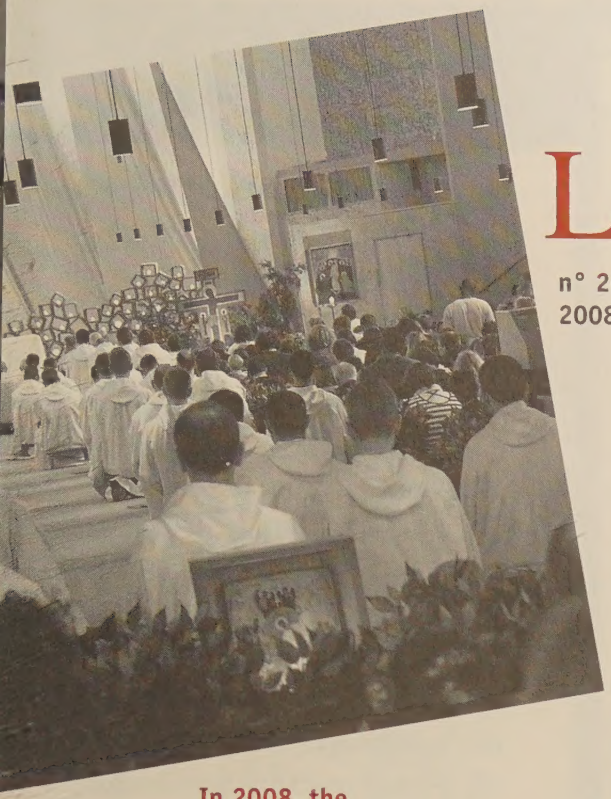

Letter from Taizé

n° 260 Quarterly 0,75 €
2008/3

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The Joy of Giving Yourself

In 2008, the *Letter from Taizé* is continuing the reflection begun at Cochabamba.

The outer pages of this issue relate four experiences that illustrate the *Letter to those who want to follow Christ* by Brother Alois.

How can I discover God's call for me? The inner double page examines this question and looks at some of the calls that God has addressed to his people throughout Bible history.

POLAND

No one would want to get bogged down in dreams of an idealized existence. We need to consent to what we are, as well as to what we are not. Searching for a happy future involves making choices.

Basia, married to Piotr and the mother of three young children, writes:

Every decision, especially a lifelong commitment, must be taken with great freedom and in silence. Soon we will celebrate our thirteenth wedding anniversary and I still remember the peace and the total certainty I had within me when I said yes to my future husband.

That peace is so important, especially for the following years, when you begin to get tired, frustrated or tempted by a different life or other people. Knowing that I made the right choice has always kept me at peace. There is no other way for me. Yes, after having made a decision it is best not to look right or left or to look back. It is better not to make comparisons and better to leave behind all the "what would have happened if..." Otherwise you will never build up anything. Even if it is not always easy. Actually, you should impose that discipline on yourself especially when it is not easy.

The same thing is true concerning children: the idea to have a larger family came naturally. But the decisive step was taken just a few years ago, when I decided to leave work to devote more time to the children who needed our presence at home. In a society where everybody has a career, and where a person's worth depends on their bank-account and on being successful, that kind of choice is not easy.

There is no "idealized existence." We all have our ups and downs. Moments of doubt, of crossing a desert, of darkness and of temptations. The main thing is to take each coming day as a new beginning. And sometimes, during the same day, it is necessary to make several new "beginnings," because none of us is ideal... Nothing is more helpful for this than a short prayer in the midst of daily life in order to listen, be listened to and borne forward by the prayer of others.

TAIZÉ

I would like so much to encourage anyone who is considering a choice for ever: When faced with such a commitment you may hesitate. But if you go deeper, you will find the joy of giving yourself entirely.

A brother who is celebrating his fiftieth anniversary in the community this year wrote this meditation on the theme of faithfulness:

At the end of Saint John's Gospel, the risen Jesus showed himself to his disciples beside the Lake of Tiberias. He gave them bread and fish. At the end of the meal, Peter, who bore the huge wound of having denied the Lord, testified three times to his love for the Lord and received three times his mission: to take care of the Lord's sheep. Jesus then told Peter how he would

Continued on last page

LISTENING TO THE WORD

Communicating the Spirit

Read 2 Kings 2:1-15

Among the different figures that people the Bible, two have a special place—Moses and Elijah. The fact that both appear beside Jesus when he is transfigured on the mountaintop (Matthew 17:3) says a lot about their importance. They sum up the two main streams of the biblical witness that, for Christians, lead to Christ: the Law (the first five books of the Bible) and the Prophets (the writings of inspired men who remind Israel of God's love and its demands). But if the Bible celebrates them, that is to show that they were not just admirable individuals. True co-workers with God, they were able to inspire other witnesses and in that way open ways forward for their entire nation. For that reason, the stories about the end of their lives also occupy an important place: Joshua continues the work of Moses and Elisha that of Elijah. Even though these successors were less original and not as great as their predecessors, their role was no less important. God's compassionate activity does not change the world only through isolated witnesses, but through a kind of fabric woven from witness to witness, by which men and women ceaselessly inspire one another.

At the beginning of the second Book of Kings we find the story of Elijah's departure (he is taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire) and the entry on stage of Elisha (he takes up Elijah's mantle and continues his prophetic work). Having realized that he was soon going to depart, Elijah asks Elisha what he can do for him. "Let me inherit a double part of your spirit," answers Elisha (v. 9), in other words the heritage of an eldest son. The request may seem bold, but it has a deep meaning: Elisha is able to see in Elijah not just his outward activity, but what animates him inwardly. He sees him as a man of God. For Elisha, continuing Elijah's work means being animated by the same Breath from God. As the story continues, Elijah invites Elisha to remain close beside him. The transition from one witness to another will occur through this closeness. When Elijah is suddenly taken up into heaven, Elisha watches this and, as a sign of mourning, tears his garments (v. 12). At the same moment he sees Elijah's mantle fall to the ground, picks it up and continues his predecessor's work.

How does the story of Elisha's call challenge me? In what ways are we like him? In what ways are we different?

What persons have inspired me the most in my life? In what way can our life inspire others?

PORTRAIT OF A VOCATION

Jeremiah

If I had met Jeremiah in the streets of Jerusalem six
turies before Jesus Christ, what impression would
have made on me? It is true that the book that bear
name is at times hard to take: too many announcem
of misfortune. But if I looked closely at his face, wo
not have discovered a man who was open, sensitive,
farsighted, who dared to express his opinion, but
was also humble, even tender, able to be moved w
speaking of God's love? One day, I would have
him walk through the city with a yoke on his shou
(ch. 27) and I would have been shocked.

The question then arises: what was the motivat
force behind that outstanding man? How did he
on his feet, without bending, while at the same t
remaining supple despite the yoke he had to bear

This question could be answered in three poin

1. Jeremiah was convinced that his vocation was
rooted in himself, in his desires or needs, but th
came from Another: before being formed in his m
er's womb, God had set him apart (1:5). That wa
constant reference-point: God had given a meanin
his life even before he realized it. His role was to resp
to this act of God without ever turning back.

Naturally, when he looked at himself, he m
have seen that he was not equal to the task. "I
too young" (1:6), I do not have what it takes to sp
in public; I don't even have the right. Still, he k
that God would not take this argument into acco
Focusing on oneself is not suitable for someone
has been called. Someone else takes care of wha
or she must be.

At times he would have liked to escape that
"I said, I will not pronounce his words or speak
more in his name, but his word was in my heart
a fire shut up in my bones. I was weary of holdi
in; indeed, I was unable to" (20:9). Today we m
find it dangerous for a human being to submit to
to another person's will, even to God's. For Jerem
it was rather the secret of his solidity. If in spit
all the oppositions he encountered he remained
shakeable, that is because in the depths of his be

SEPTEMBER

DAILY READINGS

1 Mk 6:45-52
Mon When they saw Jesus walking on the water, the disciples were terrified. But at once he spoke to them saying, "Have courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

2 1 K 19:1-8
Tue When Elijah was discouraged, an angel of God touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and, strengthened by that food, he walked until he reached the mountain of God.

3 2 Th 3:1-5
Wed May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

4 1 Tm 4:7-16
Thu St. Paul writes: Train yourself to live in godliness: it holds out promise both for the present life and the life to come.

5 Jn 15:18-27
Fri Jesus said to his disciples, "My choice of you has drawn you out of the world. Remember: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they kept my word, they will keep yours as well."

6 Gn 28:10-22
Sat The Lord says: I am with you, I will watch over you wherever you go. I will not abandon you before accomplishing what I have promised you.

7 Mt 18:15-20
SUN Jesus said: When two or three meet in my name, I am there among them.

8 Lk 1:46-55
Mon Mary said: My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

9 Dt 6:4-9
Tue Moses said to the people: The Lord our God is the only God. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.

10 Ga 6:1-10
Wed The one who sows in the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

11 Is 32:15-20
Thu Isaiah said: Once again the Lord will breathe upon us, the wilderness will become as green as the forest and my people will abide in peace.

12 Lk 6:39-45
Fri Jesus said: First take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly in order to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

13 Dn 9:18-19
Sat Daniel prayed saying: Listen to the prayer of your servant. For we rely not on our good deeds but on your great mercy.

14 Jn 3:13-17
SUN God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

15 Jm 2:1-5
Mon God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him.

16 Ac 26:1-23
Tue The Risen Christ said to Paul: I am sending you out so that people may turn from darkness to light and receive forgiveness of their sins through faith in me.

17 Ps 119:25-32
Wed I run in the path of your will, O God, for you have set my heart free.

18 2 Co 8:1-4
Thu Paul writes of the first Christian communities: Throughout ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and extreme poverty overflowed in rich generosity.

19 Jn 1:35-42
Fri Jesus asked his first disciples, "What do you want?" They answered, "Master, where do you live?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see."

20 Rm 12:1-13
Sat Do not model yourselves on the pattern of this world, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern the will of God.

21 Ph 1:20-26
SUN Paul writes: Now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ.

22 Is 43:18-21
Mon God says: I have put water in the desert for my people to drink. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises.

23 1 P 1:22-25
Tue By your obedience to the truth, you have purified yourselves so that you have sincere love for one another. Love each other deeply and from the heart.

24 Ezk 3:10-11
Wed God said to Ezekiel: Son of man, listen carefully to all my words and take them to heart, then go to your compatriots and speak to them.

25 1 Co 12:3-13
Thu There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Spirit; there are different ways of serving, but it is the same Lord; there are many forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all.

26 Si 4:1-10
Fri Deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor and you will be like a child of the Most High, who will love you more than your own mother does.

27 Mt 19:23-30
Sat In astonishment at Jesus' words, the disciples asked him, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "By human resources this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

28 Mt 21:28-31
SUN Jesus said: A father said to his two sons, "Go and work in the vineyard today." The first replied, "I will not," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The second replied, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?

29 Ph 3:17—4:1
Mon Paul writes: Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure our lowly bodies into the likeness of his glorious body.

30 1 K 19:9-13
Tue On Mount Sinai, Elijah heard God's voice in a breath of silence.

Holy Spirit,
mystery of a presence,
you always come to us.
You remain in the very
depths of our souls and
you awaken within us
the expectation of a
communion with you.

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OCTOBER

DAILY READINGS

God of all eternity,
you love each one of us
without exception and in
your constant forgiveness
we discover peace of
heart.

1 1 P 3:13-17
Wed If you suffer for what is right then you are blessed! Do not be frightened. Simply proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts.

2 Jn 7:37-44
Thu Jesus cried out: Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink!

3 1 Jn 3:16-20
Fri Christ Jesus gave his life for us, and we too should give our lives for one another.

4 Lk 13:18-21
Sat Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it all rose.

5 Mt 21:33-43
SUN Jesus said: Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it"?

6 Ps 73
Mon You hold me by my hand, Lord, and guide me with your counsel. If I am with you, I desire nothing upon the earth.

7 1 P 5:5-11
Tue Resist the tempter, standing firm in the faith, because you know that it is the same kind of suffering that the community of believers throughout the world is undergoing.

8 Is 44:1-4
Wed The Lord says: Do not be afraid, my servant whom I have chosen. I shall pour out my Spirit on your offspring.

9 Heb 10:1-18
Thu The Lord says: I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and wrongdoings I will remember no more.

10 Mk 1:12-15
Fri After being tempted in the desert, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God. "The time has come," he said, "the kingdom of God is at hand. Turn to God and believe in the good news of the Gospel."

11 2 Co 3:1-6
Sat Paul writes to the Corinthians: You are a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

12 Is 25:6-9
SUN From the prophet Isaiah: Look, this is our God; we put our hope in him and he saved us. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.

13 Mt 6:7-15
Mon Jesus said: If you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours.

14 2 P 3:14-18
Tue Make every effort to be found at peace. Understand that the great patience of God is for your salvation.

15 Jn 12:20-33
Wed Jesus said: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be.

16 Jn 21:15-19
Thu A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

17 2 Co 4:5-18
Fri Paul writes: We are in difficulties on all sides, but never crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.

18 Lk 10:1-9
Sat St LUKE Jesus sent out his disciples saying: Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there and say, "The kingdom of God is very near you."

19 1 Th 1:1-5
SUN Paul writes to the Thessalonians: We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

20 Ezk 18:21-32
Mon The Lord says: I take no pleasure in the death of anyone. Turn to me and live!

21 Heb 12:12-24
Tue Seek peace with all people. Be careful that no root of bitterness begins to grow.

22 Col 4:2-6
Wed Persevere in prayer, being watchful and thankful.

23 Heb 3:7-14
Thu Encourage each other every day, so that none of you become hardened by the deceit of sin. For we shall come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the trust we had at first.

24 Ps 65
Fri Our faults overwhelm us, Lord, but you blot them out.

25 Ph 2:1-11
Sat Taking the nature of a servant, Christ became as human beings are. And he humbled himself still further, remaining faithful to the point of death, and death on a cross. Therefore God has exalted him, and has given him the name that is above all other names.

26 Mt 22:34-40
SUN Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar: Love your neighbour as yourself.

27 Pr 3:3-6
Mon Trust in God with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding.

28 Mt 5:17-37
Tue Jesus said: If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with them first, and then come back and present your offering.

29 Mk 6:30-34
Wed When Jesus saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them at length.

30 Heb 6:13-20
Thu God has given us great encouragement to grasp the hope that is held out to us. It is an anchor for our souls.

31 Is 60:18-20
Fri God says to his people: No longer will violence be heard of in your land. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, your God will be your glory.

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Jesus our peace,
with the very little faith
we have, we long to be
attentive to you as you
tell us: "Turn to God
and put your trust in the
Gospel."

NOVEMBER

DAILY READINGS

1 Mt 5:1-12
Sat ALL SAINTS
Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart, for they shall see God.

2 Rm 14:7-15
SUN While we live, as when we die, we belong to the Lord. For Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

3 Lk 6:12-19
Mon At that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray and he spent the whole night praying to God.

4 Lk 13:18-21
Tue Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that a man took and threw into his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.

5 Is 8:11-18
Wed Isaiah said: When he laid his hand upon me, God told me, "Do not fear all that people fear. Do not be afraid. I am the one whom you are to regard as holy."

6 Jn 8:12
Thu Jesus said: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life.

7 Mt 18:1-5
Fri Jesus said: Whoever makes themselves humble like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me.

8 Is 45:18-19
Sat The Lord says: I did not tell my people to search for me in chaos. I am the Lord God, who proclaims justice, who speaks what is true.

9 1 Co 3:9b-17
SUN Paul writes: You are God's building. By the grace of God which was given to me, I laid the foundations and someone else is building on them. Now each person must be careful how they do the building. For nobody can lay down any other foundation than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ.

10 Jn 7:1-24
Mon Jesus said: My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. If anyone is prepared to do God's will they will discover whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

11 2 Co 4:16—5:10
Tue We do not fix our eyes on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

12 Rv 1:9-18
Wed John writes: One like a son of man, Christ, put his hand on me and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last, the Living One. I was dead and now I am alive for all time."

13 Jn 13:1-15
Thu Jesus said to his disciples: If I, who am Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

14 Rv 7:9-17
Fri John writes: I looked and saw a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, people and language. And they all fell down and worshipped God.

15 Rm 4:18-25
Sat St. Paul writes: Though there seemed to be no hope, Abraham hoped and believed, being fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised.

16 Mt 25:14-30
SUN In a parable, the master said to his faithful servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a little, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share your master's happiness!"

17 Ga 5:16-18,22-23
Mon Let yourselves be guided by the Spirit. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

18 Jn 8:28-36
Tue Jesus said: I do nothing of myself, but I say what the Father has taught me, and the one who sent me is with me.

19 Ps 130
Wed If you, Lord, remember all our sins, who could survive? But with you there is forgiveness; I adore you and hope in you.

20 Ph 2:12-18
Thu Paul writes: God works in you to will and act according to his good purpose so that you may become children of God with your light shining out like stars in the midst of the world.

21 Jn 6:22-29
Fri Jesus said: Do not work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures for eternal life.

22 Ac 1:6-11
Sat Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

23 Mt 25:31-40
SUN Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

24 Jn 5:24-27
Mon Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and believes in the one who sent me has passed from death to life.

25 2 Co 5:1-7
Tue Paul writes: We advance by faith, not by sight.

26 Mt 11:25-30
Wed Jesus said: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

27 Jn 15:9-17
Thu Jesus said to his disciples: You did not choose me. No, I chose you.

28 Ps 51
Fri Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

29 Jn 17:1-11
Sat Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

30 1 Co 1:4-9
SUN ADVENT You are eagerly waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will continue to give you strength to the very end.

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DECEMBER

DAILY READINGS

1 Rm 12:9-13
Mon Paul writes: Let your love be sincere, cling to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection.

2 Lk 6:36-38
Tue Jesus said: Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged.

3 Rm 8:22-27
Wed Paul writes: We look towards our salvation in hope. Now, to hope for what we see is not hope at all. To hope for what we do not see means to await it with constancy.

4 Lk 18:18-23
Thu Jesus told someone: You lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.

5 1 Co 2:1-5
Fri Paul writes: I did not come among you with eloquence or wise arguments to announce the mystery of God. I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ crucified, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

6 Mt 19:27-29
Sat Jesus said: Anyone who leaves everything for my sake will receive much more and will inherit eternal life.

7 Mk 1:1-8
SUN John the Baptist said: After me will come one more powerful than I. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.

8 Lk 1:26-38
Mon Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

9 Mk 10:2-16
Tue Jesus said: In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

10 Dt 4:29-31
Wed You will seek the Lord your God; you will find the Lord if you search for him with all your heart and all your soul.

11 Jn 10:1-10
Thu Jesus said: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

12 1 Th 5:12-22
Fri See that people do not pay back evil for evil, but always seek what is good, both among yourselves and for others.

13 Ga 1:11-24
Sat Paul writes: Before I was born, God called me by his grace, then he revealed his Son in me.

14 Jn 1:19-28
SUN John the Baptist said, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert: Make straight the way of the Lord!"

15 Is 41:14-20
Mon The Lord says: When the oppressed and needy search for water and there is none, I the Lord will answer them. I shall not forsake them. I will open rivers upon the barren heights and fountains in the valleys.

16 Ga 5:1-6
Tue Paul writes: Stand firm, for Christ has set us free in order for us to remain free.

17 Mt 18:1-10
Wed Jesus called a little child to him and said: See that you do not look down on one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven.

18 Mt 8:18-22
Thu Jesus said: Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

19 Ac 13:22-26
Fri John the Baptist prepared the coming of Jesus by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the whole people.

20 Is 43:18-21
Sat God says: Do not dwell upon the past; look, I am doing something new.

21 Lk 1:26-38
SUN The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

22 Dt 30:11-14
Mon Moses told the people: What I command you today is not too difficult for you nor beyond your reach. The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

23 Tt 1:1-4
Tue Paul writes to Titus: God gives to his faithful the hope of eternal life which he promised before the beginning of time.

24 Lk 1:67-79
Wed The dawn from on high has come to visit us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

25 Jn 1:1-18
Thu CHRISTMAS The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

26 Is 9:1-6
Fri St STEPHEN The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And this will be his name: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

27 1 Jn 1:1-4
Sat St JOHN John writes: We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

28 Lk 2:22-32
SUN When he saw the child Jesus, Simeon praised God, saying: My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples — a light to enlighten the nations.

29 Rv 22:16-21
Mon The Risen Jesus says: I am the bright morning star. Let all who are thirsty come; let whoever wishes take the water of life as a gift.

30 Ep 1:3-10
Tue God has let us know the mystery of his good purpose: to bring all things together under Christ as head.

31 Mk 10:35-45
Wed Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to save many.

Holy Spirit, inner light, you shine on the happy days as on the troubled times of our lives. And when the light seems to grow dim, your presence remains.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

ft the priority to God.
There was nothing fanatical about Jeremiah. He
e openly to God about what he could not accept.
xpressed all his discouragement. He did not hide
m others, either. With the same transparence he
admitted that his fatigue and his grievances did
ave enough weight before God. He consented to
g himself be challenged: "If you have raced with
le on foot and they have already worn you out,
will you compete with horses?" (12:5).
times God shook him up. God told him bluntly
he no longer wanted to hear unworthy words
his lips and that Jeremiah had only to return
im (15:19). And when all was said and done it
ed normal to the prophet that the last word be-
ed to the One who had been first in his life. He
v that One well enough to realize that he was not
rsh and authoritarian God, but rather the One
, amidst the harshest trials, never ceased "loving
an everlasting love and drawing to him with un-
ng kindness" (31:3), the One who in loving felt "a
ning of the heart and great compassion" (31:20).
remiah felt as if God had "seduced" him (20:7).
did not know what was happening to him, for
took him by his vulnerable side and he let him-
be taken. His whole relationship with God was
ys marked by that approach. "Vulnerability, a
erred doorway through which God gains access
s," as the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse said
ut Brother Roger.
Jeremiah remained unselfish to the end. He
r wanted to get any benefits out of his vocation;
ever claimed he had done enough or that he had
right to think about himself now. When, after
fall of Jerusalem, he was given a safe-conduct, he
d have saved himself or worked out an honorable
tion for himself. No, his place was among the
who were going to stay in Jerusalem, in solidar-
ven with their anguish. There was no question
im of taking back the life he had given. It was
igh for him to know that that life itself would
eforth be "the prize of war in every place to
ch he would go" (45:5).
xperience teaches that lack of self-interest makes a
on solid – solid and free at the same time.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Am I still free if I obey a call from Christ?

"While passing by" (Mark 1:16 & 2:14), Jesus noticed his first disciples and called them. In this "passing by" there is a breath of freedom. Jesus had no fixed strategy; he saw his future disciples and called them. He said very little to them about his expectations for them, very little also about what they could expect from him. They would discover it little by little. Jesus wanted them to be just as free as he was. Or rather; free in the same way as he was.

"You, follow me!" are the last words of Christ in the gospels (John 21:22). Risen from the dead, he continues to invite people to follow him. He is always "passing by." I do not choose the moment. One day, some words of the Gospel touch me. An encounter or an event turns my life upside down and leads me to make a commitment with him. A call is first and foremost something that happens to me.

Where then is my freedom, since I am not the one who chose to encounter Christ but rather he found me? Furthermore, when I am asked why I have made such a commitment, it is hard for me to reply since, as for the disciples, things seem to have happened partly by chance. "Passing by, Jesus saw..." and Levi, without hesitating for a second, "got up and followed him" (Mark 2:14). Is not this action a bit too quick to be a conscious, responsible and free choice? What is sure is that Levi, by getting up, *became* free. Until then, he had disposed freely of himself and his tax-collector's table. From that moment on, his horizons became wider.

Although Christ's call came to Levi as something evident, it did not violate his freedom. For where Christ is, the Holy Spirit is there as well. Christ's call corresponds to something in the depths of my heart. It comes to me both from without – from words I have heard or read, an event or an encounter – and from within. It liberates more than it commands. At the same time as Christ calls me, the Holy Spirit unbinds in me what was captive, releases what was cramped and anguished.

Jesus did not determine his disciples' behavior in advance. He was fond of asking them questions: "Who am I for you?" (Mark 8:29); "Do you want to leave, too?" (John 6:67); "Do you love me?" (John 21:15-17). Our liberty and our creative involvement are important to him. It is only my response that makes his call certain for me. My own footsteps trace out my path as a follower of his. "In calling you, God does not dictate what you have to do. His call is first and foremost a personal encounter." (*Letter to those who want to follow Christ*).

give glory to God through his death before saying to him: Follow me!

The disciples had followed Christ faithfully during the years of his public life. Now that he was no longer visibly with them, Jesus said to them once again, "Follow me," confirming his constant presence alongside everyone, especially those who love him.

If God opens our hearts to that presence, is it possible not to recognize it and not to let it enter into our life with trust? Joy brings us together; that joy attempts to grow through praise: "Happy those you choose and bring near to dwell in your courts" (Psalm 65).

Then our hesitations and fears do not matter any longer: "My grace is enough for you, for my power comes to full expression in weakness," God said to Saint Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Caught up in listening to Christ and following him willingly, we find ourselves drawn into God's plan where every person is known and loved. A happy future opens up, where everything is given in this Kingdom where we want to live, where Christ is the way forward that we discern by contemplating his life on earth. The words of the psalmist apply to that life: "You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; then you led us out to breathe again" (Psalm 66). They also apply to our life, since we can only grow in faith by passing through a succession of acts of faithfulness which are at the same time joyful moments with the Lord.

"The time has come and the Kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus, having returned to the Father, sent the Holy Spirit into the Kingdom of the New Covenant, now at work everywhere and in everyone. He loves Creation and is waiting for us to take part in his fullness. In his day the psalmist already heard that "the whole earth will remember and return to the Lord" (Psalm 22). So what could we still be afraid of?

BRAZIL

We are not alone in following Christ. We are borne along by that mystery of communion which is the Church. In it, our yes becomes praise.

Miguel, a young Argentinian volunteer working in Brazil, writes:

In the North-East of Brazil, in the State of Paraiba, the *Casa dos sonhos*, the House of Dreams, welcomes children and young people in difficulty or in vulnerable situations. We offer hospitality to 110 children and teenagers. We try to create for them a place of meeting, of games, of attention and of resistance. We also try to involve mothers as volunteers, and in this way to show them a way out of paralysis or the feeling of meaninglessness generated by so much insecurity and lacks in daily life.

Life with others has been a great teacher for me. I recognized myself in reading the *Letter to those who want to follow Christ.* Such a life enables us to be with others with whom we can make plans, study, discern, put things off till later and dream... I thank God for this "mystery of shared communion."

Times of prayer together have enabled us to make many discoveries. Prayer has helped us not to lie to ourselves, to remain serene, to give thanks. Concretely, we have tried to create in our home spaces where we can come together in a climate of prayer to call to memory moments spent with others, simple meals, visits to places which many told us were too dangerous for us...

When Brother Alois states that in each of us there is the desire for a future of happiness, personally I have dreamed of that happy future with the children, the young people and their families. A happy future created by the power of those microscopic acts that have given me the possibility of marveling and of asking myself: what is God trying to tell me through the life I am living?

After all these years of volunteering, I am now able to receive another teaching: volunteering is the locus of a deep discernment. I would say that it is a deep vocational experience, an experience of encountering the God of life.

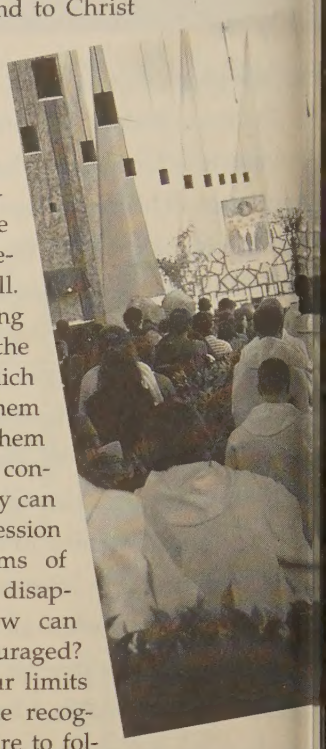
This God leads us to commit ourselves on behalf of the weakest and enables us to recognize that by ourselves we can do nothing. This God tells us that being attached to Christ requires both a personal decision and an involvement with others for greater justice and solidarity.

TAIZÉ

In calling you, God does not dictate what you have to do. His call is first and foremost a personal encounter. Let Christ welcome you, and you will discover what road to take.

How can I find meaning for my life? How can I discover God's call in daily life? With this as a focal point, a workshop is animated by a brother every week in Taizé. After a brief introduction to the *Letter to those who want to follow Christ*, the participants are sent into small groups with some questions: What concrete choices could best express my faith in Christ? What resistances to making these choices are there in me? How does Christ help me to commit myself?

Many young people wonder how to find lasting happiness in a world which offers numerous choices. By speaking about and listening to various experiences, the participants explore concrete and new ways of understanding God's call. The main obstacles they face are fear and lack of courage to make daring decisions. It is true that in order to respond to Christ with a "yes" we need to take risks. But God does not impose his will on humanity, nor does he force us to respond to his call. Often the young speak about the emptiness which immobilizes them and keeps them from taking concrete steps. They can have the impression they are victims of weariness and disappointment. How can they be encouraged? If we accept our limits and fears while recognizing our desire to follow God, a way forward can open up. It is Christ who enters into our emptiness. Responding to his call means letting God work in this space of our life. Our fears and failings can then be transformed into a source of courage and joy. Taking risks becomes possible. To repeat the words of Brother Roger "Saying yes to God gives a meaning to our lives".



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e-mail: letter@taize.fr www.taize.fr
News from Taizé by email twice-a month free of charge:
www.taize.fr/taizenews.php
Directeur de publication : A. Trochard, Edition et impression : Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France, CPPAP n° 0110K79608 - DL 1063

ISSN 1628-9992